

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS

Secretary Gary Westcott



**Date:** July 18, 2025

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### **Correctional Professionals Honored at Annual Training Conference**

*Assistant Secretary DeLouche receives highest honor*

Baton Rouge, La – The Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections is pleased to announce that several staff members were recognized for their outstanding contributions by the Southern States Correctional Association (SSCA) during their Annual Training Conference that was held last week in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Assistant Secretary Renee' DeLouche, the outgoing SSCA Immediate Past President, was honored with the prestigious David H. Williams Award, which is the highest commendation given by the membership of the Association. This award highlights the significant contributions of the deserving member. The winner joins a long list of individuals who have displayed distinguished accomplishments, services and deeds in the field of criminal justice. DeLouche has been an active SSCA member for 24 years. She has served on numerous committees, was previously the SSCA State Representative and has held every board position.

Amite Probation and Parole Specialist Michael Culotta was honored with the Probation & Parole Officer of the Year award in recognition of his remarkable contributions to the corrections field. Culotta joined the Department in 2016 and currently serves as the Veteran and Behavioral Court Officer. A U.S. Army veteran, he served overseas during the Global War on Terror. Culotta is also a squad leader for the Division's Special Response Team, former member of the U.S. Marshal's Task Force, range safety officer, and plays a key role in training at both the District and the Academy. Last year, he led warrant sweeps that resulted in over 22 arrests and the clearance of numerous warrants. Culotta's work with the Special Response Team has contributed to a total of 125 arrests, 44 seizures, and 16 narcotics confiscations.

Administrative Program Director Rhonda Babel's daughter was selected to receive the Kenneth Law Scholarship. SSCA understands the financial strain seeking an education can have. In an effort to relieve some of the financial burden, the Association has the ability to annually offer 10 scholarships to active members or their immediate family. Babel was present and accepted the \$1,000 scholarship on behalf of her daughter, Zoie Babel.

Lieutenant Crystal Brown who currently serves at Louisiana State Penitentiary, was officially sworn in as the newest SSCA Board Member. Brown demonstrates professionalism, exceptional attention to detail and a deep understanding of legal protocols. Her skills in navigating complex legal frameworks enables her to effectively engage with a wide-range of stakeholders that fosters open communication and trust. Brown's incredible organizational abilities allow her to manage complex schedules while proactively addressing potential challenges. Her dedication not only strengthens overall effectiveness but also upholds the Department's commitment to integrity and excellence in legal affairs, making her a valuable asset to the team.

"I'm extremely proud of our team members who received recognition for their capabilities and expertise from an organization that deeply supports professional growth and development for those in the corrections field," stated Gary Westcott, secretary, Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections. "The Department was well-represented at the conference by correctional professionals who are making a significant impact on safety across the State of Louisiana, and who serve with honor, integrity, dedication, and exemplify professionalism.

The Association is comprised of approximately 1,200 members from 14 states who represent every type of corrections agency. The annual event featured a wide-range of inspirational training sessions, which were led by notable speakers, including NFL Hall of Fame inductee Eric Boles; New York Times best-selling author Janine Driver; retired San Bernardino County Deputy Sheriff Meagan McCarthy; and Secretary Gary Maynard, a former corrections director who served in Maryland, Iowa, South Carolina, and Oklahoma. In addition, attendees had an opportunity to network and foster camaraderie with engaging activities.

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